

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 29, 2006

The Honorable Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Speaker Hastert and Leader Pelosi:

As members of the New Democrat Coalition, we understand the challenge in reconciling the House and Senate immigration bills. We write to you today in support of the reforms to the visa program for highly-skilled workers contained in the Senate bill and believe that any final immigration bill should retain these provisions. A successful immigration policy must ensure America's continued competitiveness, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The United States currently suffers a severe shortage of the highly-skilled workers our economy needs to grow and remain globally competitive. This shortfall exists for two reasons. First, the number of domestic STEM graduates does not meet the demands of U.S. firms. As a long-term goal, we must continue to encourage more students to study in the STEM fields and work towards earning advanced degrees. Second, our outdated immigration policies fail to meet the country's need for highly-skilled workers as evidenced by the recent announcement by the Citizenship and Immigration Services that the H-1B visa cap for FY 2007 has already been reached. The result is a sixteen month blackout for firms to access the international talent pool.

We believe our nation must find ways to educate and train its own workforce in the STEM fields, and hiring these skilled American workers should remain a priority for American businesses. Raising the skill level of the American workforce is the most critical part of America's competitiveness strategy for meeting the needs of our global economy, and we support these efforts. Forward-looking immigration reform can both alleviate the shortage in the near-term and provide increased funding, through visa fees, for retraining and educating the U.S. workforce.

We applaud the Senate for including such measures in their comprehensive legislation, and we believe these provisions must be retained in their entirety during a House-Senate conference. Among the highlights are:

- **Increasing the cap on H-1B visas, and permitting it to respond to market demands**
- **Expanding the categories of H-1B workers who are exempt from the H-1B cap, specifically students graduating from U.S. universities in the STEM fields**
- **Streamlining the employment-based Green Card process for professionals with advanced degrees and their dependents**
- **Modernizing student visa programs, both to attract the best and brightest and to facilitate their entry into the U.S. workforce**

Enacting these crucial reforms this year is a priority. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,


Ellen Tauscher


Adam Smith


Ron Kind


Artur Davis

Kendrick Mear

Dorita Sanchez

Rahn Emanuel

Dainne

Josephine
Stephanie Smith

Russ Holt

Pat Abbott

Jane Hume

Neil Zamm

Carl S. Schiff

John Smith

CC: Majority Leader John A. Boehner
Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers, Jr.